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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS TOP LABOR LEADER

REF: TOKYO 1544

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The Japan Trade Union Confederation (Rengo) wants the new Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) government to focus on increasing employment and improving the social safety net, Rengos's newly elected President Nobuaki Koga told the Ambassador on November 6. Ambassador Roos and the high-level delegation, who accompanied Koga, also discussed women's participation in the workforce and the importance of work-life balance. Koga emphasized Rengo's involvement in nuclear disarmament and repeated Rengo's hope that President Obama would visit Hiroshima or Nagasaki. END SUMMARY.

2. (SBU) Rengo, Japan's largest trade organization, elected Nobuaki Koga its president on October 9. Koga originally hails from the Matsushita (Panasonic) Electric Industrial Workers' Union. He is close to Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirofumi Hirano, who also belonged to a Matsushita labor union. Koga explained the recent election marks a major turning point in Japan's post-war history. He believes the Hatoyama Administration is doing a good job, considering this is its first time governing, but Koga said the government must begin showing concrete results by no later than early next year, if it is to continue to enjoy popular support.

3. (SBU) Asked by the Ambassador what Rengo believes should be priorities for the new DPJ government, Koga asserted Rengo's primary goals -- employment and improvement of the social safety net -- should also be at the top of the DPJ's list. Rengo advocates on behalf of working people, Koga said. Along with promoting new jobs and sustaining good working conditions, it is essential the government improve the social safety net as Japanese society ages and the gap between the haves and have nots grows.

4. (SBU) Koga was accompanied by Deputy President Naomi Okamoto, the first woman to hold this position. Asked about the situation of Japanese women in the workplace, Okamoto pointed out that women are paid on average 33 percent less than men in Japan. She noted that Rengo was also working to

address the long work hours common in Japan by emphasizing the necessity of work-life balance.

¶5. (SBU) During the meeting, Koga also raised the importance of nuclear disarmament to Rengo (reftel). He congratulated the Ambassador on President Obama's Nobel Peace Prize and once again expressed Rengo's hope that the President will visit Hiroshima or Nagasaki. Ambassador Roos explained he had been deeply moved by his visit to Hiroshima and told Koga he would certainly share his impressions of that visit with President Obama.

ROOS